American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

September 27, 2011

President Obama on Passing of Wangari Maathai

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
September 26, 2011

Statement by the President on the Passing of Wangari Maathai

It is with great sadness that I learned of the passing of Professor Wangari Maathai. On behalf of all Americans, Michelle and I send our deepest condolences to Professor Maathai's family and the people of Kenya at this difficult time. The world mourns with you and celebrates the extraordinary life of this remarkable woman who devoted her life to peacefully protecting what she called "our common home and future." The work of the Greenbelt Movement stands as a testament to the power of grassroots organizing, proof that one person's simple idea—that a community should come together to plant trees—can make a difference, first in one village, then in one nation, and now across Africa. Professor Maathai's tireless efforts earned her not only a Nobel Peace Prize and numerous prestigious awards, but the respect of millions who were inspired by her commitment to conservation, democracy, women's empowerment, the eradication of poverty, and civic engagement. Professor Maathai further advanced these objectives through her service in the Kenyan government, the African Union, and the United Nations. As she told the world, "we must not tire, we must not give up, we must persist." Her legacy will stand as an example to all of us to persist in our pursuit of progress.

State Dept. Fact Sheet: Benefits of Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance
September 26, 2011

National Security Benefits of the CTBT

Key Point: A legally binding global ban on nuclear explosive testing benefits U.S. national security.

Since 1992, the United States has observed a unilateral moratorium on nuclear explosive testing. This moratorium is based on our national security assessment that the United States does not need to conduct nuclear explosive tests in order to ensure the safety, security and effectiveness of the nuclear forces we maintain to deter nuclear attacks on the United States, our allies and partners. Moreover, reinforcing the international norm against nuclear explosive testing is very much in the U.S. security interest.

Based on the experience the United States has gained from 15 years of monitoring our nuclear weapons stockpile under the Stockpile Stewardship Program, in addition to our commitments to maintain and refurbish, as necessary, our nuclear weapons and to modernize our aging nuclear weapons infrastructure, we do not believe that the United States will need to conduct nuclear explosive tests ever again. Our national laboratory directors have confirmed that we know more about nuclear weapons through the stockpile stewardship program than we knew when we explosively tested nuclear weapons during the Cold War. We can now do more than just identify problems, we can predict and remedy them before they affect the safety and security of the arsenal.

Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) would create a legally binding prohibition on nuclear explosive tests for all of its parties. The CTBT will benefit United States national security by:

• Hindering states that do not have nuclear weapons expertise and experience from advancing their nuclear weapons capabilities, while not affecting the ability of the United States to maintain its own nuclear deterrent force. States interested in pursuing a nuclear weapons program or advancing or expanding the capabilities of an existing nuclear weapons program would have to either risk deploying weapons without confidence that they will work as designed, or incurring international condemnation and reprisals by conducting nuclear explosive tests in violation of the Treaty;
• Impeding states with more established nuclear weapon capabilities from confirming the performance of advanced nuclear weapon designs that they have not tested successfully in the past; and
• Constraining regional arms races in the years and decades to come. These constraints will be particularly important in Asia, where states are building up and modernizing nuclear forces.

U.S. ratification of the CTBT will also help enhance our leadership role in nonproliferation and strengthen our hand in pursuing tough actions against suspected proliferators by enhancing international perceptions of the United States' commitment to global nuclear constraints.

Once the Treaty enters into force, the United States will monitor compliance with the CTBT using our national technical means of verification, complemented by the International Monitoring System (IMS), and will have the right to call for on-site inspections in countries we believe have conducted a nuclear explosion. The cooperative verification measures conducted under the CTBT will give the Treaty's Parties a common basis for engaging in consultations and seeking clarifications of activities

suspected to be in violation of the treaty. This will benefit the United States both by deterring potential cheaters and by increasing the risk that countries conducting a nuclear explosive test will be caught and held accountable for their actions by the international community.

In the case of unforeseen, extraordinary events pertaining to the CTBT that jeopardize our supreme national interests, the United States is able to invoke a provision of the Treaty that would permit us to withdraw from it to ensure our national security.

The Treaty will benefit U.S. national security. The United States will be much better off with the CTBT in force than without it.

New Data from Pacific May Help Save Coral Reefs

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — A new coral reef observation station is operating in Saipan in the Northern Mariana island chain of the North Pacific. The station, installed in August, will transmit an array of environmental observations, providing another monitoring tool for the Coral Reef Early Warning System (CREWS) developed by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The new station is the first of its kind in the Pacific. It expands a data collection network that includes stations in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the Cayman Islands. The stations collect data on water and air temperature, wind speed and direction, barometric pressure, precipitation and salinity. The data will help researchers better understand the balance of physical, chemical and biological processes that preserve or damage coral reef ecosystems.

Coral reefs are important resources, providing billions of dollars in economic and environmental benefits such as fisheries, tourism and coastal protection. In Saipan alone, the economic benefits that stem from the reef are estimated to be more than $42 million.

Jim Hendee is a NOAA coral expert who led the team that built and deployed the latest addition to the CREWS stations. "This particular installation has been through several years of planning and logistics, and I'm proud of the dedicated team of scientists and engineers who brought it to fruition," he said. "This station will expand NOAA's conservation efforts in the Pacific and provide environmental managers with the data they need to understand the region's coastal and coral reef ecosystem dynamics."

Corals are small marine animals related to jellyfish. They form reefs when huge colonies come together and secrete calcite-based exoskeletons that give them structural rigidity.

The CREWS stations, installed in the waters of the reef, make up one component of a larger data-gathering system devoted to keeping watch over fragile coral reef ecosystems. The Integrated Coral Observing Network (ICON) brings together data from observation stations, satellites, radar and other sources, according to NOAA, to allow ecological forecasting for reefs. Data from the stations is also fed to NOAA's National Data Buoy Center and made available to the World Meteorological Organization for use by weather services all over the world.

Understanding the conditions that cause reefs to thrive or degrade is important to protecting them from potentially harmful human activities. Ships aground, poor anchoring, and destructive fishing with explosives are all practices that can damage reefs. Pollution and sediment runoff from land are other factors that can disrupt reef ecological balances and set off declines.

Besides localized pressures, reefs are also sensitive to global changes, such as sea temperature increases. The World Resources Institute estimates that 75 percent of the world's coral reefs are threatened, a number that may rise to 95 percent in the near future.

In Brief: National Book Festival Highlights Diverse Authors

The Library of Congress hosted the 11th annual National Book Festival September 24–25, bringing more than 100 authors, poets and illustrators to the National Mall for two days of events. Favorite tellers of America's stories, such as author and longtime radio host Garrison Keillor, memoirist Dave Eggers and Pulitzer Prize–winning novelist Toni Morrison, were joined by authors whose stories combine the cultures of their homelands with their experiences in the United States.

The Journal of Children's Literature called Indian-American writer Uma Krishnaswami "a major voice in the expanding of international and multicultural young adult fiction." Japanese-American comic-book artist Kazu Kibuishi founded and edited the critically acclaimed comic series *Flight*. Children's author Carmen Agra Deedy has written 10 books (eight in English, two in Spanish) and created an award-winning audiobook detailing her immigrant experience, *Growing Up Cuban in Decatur, Georgia*.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov)